

# NONVERBAL CODES IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM INTERACTION: ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY AT STATE ISLAMIC COLLEGE (STAIN) PAREPARE

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## ABSTRACT

The use of nonverbal codes in communication in classroom causes the effectiveness of teaching and learning interaction in classroom, especially in English classroom interaction in STAIN Parepare. This research can give description and information to improve teachers' behaviors' in teaching and learning interaction in classroom. It also can be a part of culture in teaching and learning environment in campus. This research is conducted in English education study program. The design of the research is ethnography study. The research takes two English teachers as data resources. It used observation in collecting data. In analyzing data, the researchers used Constant Comparative Methods. The research findings show the teachers nonverbal codes in English classroom interaction include: (1) gesture such as gesture while talking to the classroom moves around the classroom while teaching, and has a relaxed body position while talking to the class.; (2) eye movement such as looks at the class while talking; and (3) smiles at the class while talking.

**Keywords:** Nonverbal Codes, Communication in classroom

## ABSTRAK

Penggunaan kode nonverbal dalam komunikasi di kelas menyebabkan efektivitas interaksi pembelajaran di kelas, terutama dalam interaksi kelas bahasa Inggris di STAIN Parepare. Penelitian ini dapat memberikan gambaran dan informasi untuk meningkatkan perilaku guru dalam pembelajaran di kelas. Hal ini juga dapat menjadi bagian dari budaya dalam mengajar dan lingkungan belajar di kampus. Penelitian ini dilakukan pada program studi pendidikan bahasa Inggris. Desain penelitian ini adalah studi etnografi. Penelitian ini mengambil dua guru bahasa Inggris sebagai sumber data. Observasi digunakan dalam mengumpulkan data. Dalam menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan *Constant Comparative Methods*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan kode nonverbal guru dalam interaksi kelas bahasa Inggris meliputi: (1) gestur ketika berbicara dengan mengelilingi kelas pada saat mengajar, dan memiliki posisi tubuh yang santai ketika berbicara, (2) gerakan mata seperti terlihat pada kelas saat berbicara; dan (3) tersenyum pada kelas saat berbicara.

**Kata Kunci:** Kode Nonverbal, Komunikasi di Kelas

## BACKGROUND

Our activities in all day relate to communication. Also, teaching and learning activities in classroom always include communication activities whether verbal communication or nonverbal communication. Lustig and Koester explain verbal means "consisting of words."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, a verbal code is a set of rules

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<sup>1</sup>Lustig and Koester. *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across*. (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. 2010) p.168

about the use of words in the creation of messages. Words can obviously be either spoken or written. Verbal codes, then, include both oral (spoken) language and non-oral (written) language while nonverbal codes is a subtle set of nonlinguistic behaviors that are often enacted subconsciously.

When people talk about communication, they usually may think communication is to use human languages to exchange information with others. They rarely notice that language is not the only way to communicate with others. Actually, the human ancestor uses nonverbal communication to communicate during the early stage, and nonverbal communication, such as body language. Body language in communication plays an irreplaceable role in human's communication. Psychology study found that in face to face communication between two people, more than 50% of the exchange of information is achieved through a silent body language (<http://www.qqcate.cn>).

Nonverbal communication is an important component of our daily life. Whenever people meet we will find conversation on non-verbal level, even if it seems to be no communication at all. The diversity of nonverbal communication is huge each individual has its own way of sending and receiving nonverbal messages.<sup>2</sup>

Nonverbal behaviors can become part of the communication process when someone intentionally tries to convey a message or when someone attributes meaning to the nonverbal behavior of another, whether or not person intended to communicate a particular meaning.

Verbal and nonverbal behaviors are inextricably intertwined. Verbal codes usually follow nonverbal codes or vice versa or verbal and nonverbal is sent simultaneously because nonverbal codes are usually performed spontaneously.

The use of nonverbal codes in communication in classroom whether they are as teachers' management talk or instructional talk cause the effectiveness of teaching and learning interaction in classroom, especially in English classroom interaction. It is considered that still many English students are in low level in listening. They get difficulties in understanding lecturers' instructions and explanations. Lecturers' nonverbal codes can help students in understanding lecturers' talk. In this research, the researchers formulate research question "what nonverbal codes do lecturers do in English classroom interactions?"

The objective of the research is to describe and to explain the lecturers' nonverbal codes in English classroom interactions. The significance of the research is giving description and information to improve lecturers' behaviors in teaching learning interaction in classroom. It also can be a part of culture in teaching and learning environment in campus. Lustig and Koester categorize nonverbal behaviors into body movement, space, touch, time, voice, chemical code, and dermal code.<sup>3</sup> But in this research, the researcher limits the research into body movement and touch.

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<sup>2</sup>Volm Jochen. *Impact of Norms and Values on Non-verbal Communication in International Business*. Online. <http://www.grin.com/e-book/6756/impact-of-norms-and-values-on-non-verbal-communication-in-international>. Accessed on March 19th, 2011. 2001.p.32

<sup>3</sup>Lustig and Koester. *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across*.(Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. 2010) p.204

## Literature Review

There are a lot of definitions to nonverbal communication. Non verbal communication involves all those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting there are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver. The definition not only marks the boundaries of nonverbal communication, but also reflects how the process actually works and it also permits us to include unintentional as well as intentional behavior in the total communication event. A few more words need to be said about the definition above. It has referred to environment. It means that interpretation of nonverbal behaviors should depend on the context. Nonverbal communication includes tone of voice, facial expressions, postures, gestures, and use of time, all of which are used to communicate messages (<http://www.okarticle.com>).

The importance of nonverbal codes in communication has been well established. Nonverbal communication is a multi channeled process that is usually performed spontaneously; it typically involves a subtle set of nonlinguistic behavior that are often enacted subconsciously. Nonverbal behaviors can become part of communication process when someone intentionally tries to convey a message or when someone attributes meaning to the nonverbal behavior of another, whether or not the person intended to communicate a particular meaning.<sup>4</sup>

### Characteristics of Nonverbal Codes

Nonverbal communication messages function as a “silent language” and impart their meanings in subtle and covert ways. People process nonverbal messages, both the sending and receiving of them, with less awareness than they process verbal messages.

Unlike verbal communication system, however, there are no dictionaries or formal sets of rules to provide a systematic list of the meaning of a culture’s nonverbal code systems. The meanings of nonverbal messages are usually less precise than are those of verbal codes.

### Relationship of Nonverbal to Verbal Communication

The relationship of nonverbal communication system to the verbal message system can take a variety of forms. Nonverbal messages can be used to regulating, repeating, complementing, substations or contradicting for the verbal message.

*Regulating*, nonverbal behaviors are often used to regulate the cooperative communication .For example, if the speaker wishes to signal that it is another people’s turn to talk, he or she will finish his or her present utterance, look directly at the other person .If the person is cooperative, he or she will start talking. Nonverbal communication has the function of regulating, to regulate the situation which the verbal communication cannot do.

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<sup>4</sup> Lustig and Koester. *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across*.( Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. 2006) p.198

*Repeating*, in a communication, verbal and nonverbal messages are sent simultaneously. In verbal communication, if we want to express our thinking, we have to say it twice with sentences. Verbal communication represents the literal content of a message whereas the nonverbal component communicates the style or “how” the message is to be interpreted. Nonverbal communication can reinforce what’s said in verbal language. By repeating the verbal message nonverbally, as by a gesture, there is a better chance for the receiver to understand the message. It can save time and let people know what you want to express more quickly.

*Complementing*, nonverbal communication also has the function of complementing. Use nonverbal behavior to compensate verbal information. For example, you can see how an apology becomes more forceful if your face, as well as your words, is saying “I’m sorry.” You always make your voice louder than normal conversation when you are angry. Complementing generally adds more information to messages, which can help to express the information. If it separates from verbal language, the message conveyed by nonverbal symbols will fail to be understood which results in failure of performing normal human communication.

*Substitution*, verbal behavior can be replaced by Nonverbal behavior to convey certain meanings. If people see a very special friend, they are apt to enlarge the size of the smile and throw open arms to greet him or her, which is a substitute for all the words to convey the same feeling, and let their friends feel more happy by just saying some words.

*Contradicting*, on some occasions, our verbal actions send signal opposite the literal meanings contained in our verbal message. You tell someone you are relaxed and at ease but your quavering voice and shaking hands reveal your secret. Do people believe you when you say “nothing” when you are sweating and look worried?

### **Cultural Universals in Nonverbal Communication**

Michael Argyle in Lustig & Koester has listed a number of characteristics of nonverbal communication that are universal across all cultures: (1) the same body parts are used for nonverbal expressions; (2) nonverbal channels are used to convey similar information, emotions, values, norms, and self-disclosing messages; (3) nonverbal messages accompany verbal communication and are used in art and ritual; (4) the motives for using the nonverbal channel, such as when speech is impossible, are similar across cultures; and (5) nonverbal messages are used to coordinate and control a range of contexts and relationships that are similar across cultures.<sup>5</sup>

### **Cultural Variations in Nonverbal Communication**

Most forms of nonverbal communication can be interpreted only within the framework of the culture in which they occur. Cultures vary in their nonverbal behaviors in three ways. First, cultures differ in the specific repertoire of behaviors that are enacted. Movement, body positions, postures, vocal intonations,

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<sup>5</sup> Lustig and Koester. *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across*.( Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006) p.200

gestures, spatial requirements, and even dances and ritualized actions are specific to a particular culture.

Second, all cultures have display rules that govern when and under what circumstances various nonverbal expressions are required, preferred, permitted, or prohibited. Third, cultures vary in the interpretations, or meanings, that are contributed to particular nonverbal behaviors. Three possible interpretations could be imposed on a given instance of nonverbal behavior; it is random, it is idiosyncratic, or it is shared. An interpretation that the behavior is random means that it has no particular meaning to anyone. An *idiosyncratic* interpretation suggest that the behaviors are unique to special individuals or relationship, and they therefore have particular meanings only to these people. The third interpretation is that the behaviors have shared meaning and significance, as when a group of people jointly attribute the same meaning to a particular nonverbal act.

### **Nonverbal Messages in Intercultural Communication**

All cultures make use of nonverbal behavior in communication but the meaning of nonverbal behavior varies across cultures. There are six types of nonverbal codes to demonstrate the importance in understanding how members of a culture attempt to understand, organize, and interpret the behaviors of others. The nonverbal includes body movement, space, touch, time, voice, and other nonverbal codes.

*Body movements*, the study of body movements, or body language, is known as kinesics. Kinesic behaviors include gestures, head movements, facial expressions, eye behaviors, and other physical displays that can be used to communicate.

*Space*, the use of space functions as an important communication system in all cultures. Cultures are organized in some spatial pattern, and that pattern can reveal the character of the people in that culture. Two important features on the way of cultures use the space around them are the different needs for personal space and the messages that are used to indicate territoriality.

*Touch*, touch is probably the most basic component of human communication. It is experienced long before we are able to see and speak, and it is a fundamental part of the human experience. Touch is often to indicate affect, the expression of positive and negative feeling and emotions. Touch is also used as a sign of playfulness and task related activities and touch is frequently used as a means of control.

*Time*, the study of time – how people use it, structure it, interpret it, and understand its passage - is called chronemics. We consider chronemics from two perspectives: time orientations and time system.

Time orientation refers to the value or importance the member of a culture place on the passage of time. Lustig and Koester indicated that different cultures can have very different conceptions about the appropriate ways to comprehend events and experiences<sup>6</sup>. Specifically, some cultures are predominantly past-

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<sup>6</sup>Lustig and Koester. *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across* (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. 2006) p.121

oriented, others are present-oriented, and still others prefer a future-oriented worldview.

Time systems are the implicit cultural rules that are used to arrange sets of experiences in some meaningful way. There are three types of time systems: technical, formal, and informal.

*Voice*, **n**onverbal messages are often used to accent or underscore the verbal message by adding emphasis to particular words or phrases. Indeed the many qualities of the voice itself, in addition to the actual meaning of the words, form the vocalic nonverbal communication system. Vocalic also include many nonspeech sounds, such as belching, laughing, and crying, and vocal “filler” sounds such as *uh*, *um*, and, *uh-huh*.

*Other nonverbal codes*, **m**any other nonverbal code systems are relevant to an understanding of intercultural communication because virtually everything we say, do, create, and wear can communicate messages about our culture and ourselves. These other codes include the chemical, dermal, physical, and artifactual systems that create a multichanneled set of nonverbal messages.

### **Synchrony of Nonverbal Communication Codes**

Cultures train their members to synchronize the various nonverbal behaviors to form a response pattern that typifies the expected behaviors in that culture. Subtle variations in the response patterns are clearly noticed, even when they differ by only a few thousandths of a second.

Behavioral synchrony is the use of nonverbal codes can be found in virtually all cultures. Not only must an individual’s many behaviors be coordinated appropriately, they must also mesh properly with the words and movements of the other interactants.

### **Nonverbal Communication and Intercultural Competence**

The rules and norms that govern most nonverbal communication behaviors are both culture-specific and outside of conscious awareness. That is, although members of a culture know and follow their culture’s expectations, they probably learned the norms for proper nonverbal expressiveness very early in childhood, and these norms may never have been articulated verbally.

An important consequence of this out-of-awareness aspect is that members of a culture use their norms to determine appropriate nonverbal behaviors and then make negative judgments about other feelings, motives, intentions, and even their attractiveness if these norms are violated. Often the violations will be inaccurately attributed to aspects of personality, attitudes, or intelligence rather than to a mismatch between learned nonverbal codes.

To answer the problem of the research, the researcher uses ethnographic design. Ethnographic designs are qualitative research procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-shared group’s shared patterns of behavior, belief, and language that develop over time.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Creswell W. John. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. (USA: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall., 2008) p. 473

Ethnography as practiced in education has been shaped by cultural anthropology, by an emphasis on the issue of writing about culture, and by how ethnographic reports need to be read and understood today.<sup>8</sup> The culture in educational ethnography focused on career and life history or role analyses of individuals, small work and leisure groups within classrooms or schools, studies of single classroom abstracted as small societies, and studies of school facilities or school districts that approach these units as discrete communities.

Ethnography usually refers to forms of social research having a substantial number of features. Ethnography emphasis strongly on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them and investigates a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, in detail.<sup>9</sup>

The researchers will take data from 3 (three) English lecturers of STAIN Parepare. The data resources are determined by using random sampling because English lecturers are considered homogeny in educational background and tribe.

In collecting data, the researchers use (1) video-camera to record teaching learning process in classroom and (2) notebook to make field note. Field notes are gathered, recorded, and compiled on-site during the course of a study. For an ethnographic researcher, field notes provide a record of the researcher's understanding of the lives, people, and events that are the focus of the research.

In collecting data, the researchers use participant observation methods. The researchers participate in classroom to record teaching learning process. Participant observation is undertaken to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of a situation\ and to engage in activities that are appropriate to a given situation and that provide useful information.

In analyzing data, the researchers use *Constant Comparative Methods*. This method includes data organizing and coding. Coding is data analyzing process by categorizing concepts. The data taken from observation will be organized by making transcripts. Then data are analyzed by categorizing and labeling. After categorizing the data, the researcher will relates one category to other category.

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<sup>8</sup> Creswell W. John. 2008.P. 474

<sup>9</sup> Atkinson Paul & Hammersley Marthyn. Edited by Norman K. Densin & Yvonna S. Lincoln. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. ("Ethnography and Participant Observation". USA: SAGE Publication). 1994.p.248

## DISCUSSION

To answer research question, constant comparative methods is utilized to describe the teachers' nonverbal behaviors in English classroom interaction. The results include:

### *Gesture*

Gestures are a movement in which one part of the body grooms, messages, rubs, holds, fidgets, pinches, or otherwise manipulates another body part. Teachers' gesture includes gesture while taking to the class, move around the classroom while talking, and has relaxed body position while taking the class.



Figure 1. Teacher's gesture while talking to the class

It is commonly believe that comprehensible input and interaction are essential to English acquisition. It should be noted that the majority of SLA research on English teacher talk has been on verbal comprehensive input, and that little attention has been paid to non verbal input, in particular, to gestures accompanying teacher talk in the English classroom.



Figure 2. Teacher moves around the classroom while talking



Nonverbal behavior of L2 teachers is a fundamental aspect of teacher-learner interaction and that teachers seem to utilize gestures as a means to provide comprehensible input to L2 learners and to perform error correction. McNeil in Talegani (2006) offers four different categories for gestures in spontaneous interaction:

*Iconic gestures*: which depict the content of speech, both objects and actions, in terms of their physical characteristics. In other words, they are closely linked to the semantic content of the talk. Iconic gestures may be *kinetographic*, representing some body actions, like walking fast, or *pictographic*, representing the actual form of an object, like outlining the shape of an object. *Metaphoric gestures*: similar to iconic gestures, these gestures may be kinetographic or pictographic, but they represent an abstract idea rather than a concrete object or action. *Deitic gestures*: are pointing gestures which indicate either concrete entities in the physical environment, or abstract loci in space. Deistic gestures can be either actual or metaphoric. For example, we may point to an object in the immediate environment, or we may point behind us to represent past time. *Beat gestures*: these are gestures in which the hand moves with a rhythmical pulse that lines up with the stress peaks of speech. A typical beat gesture is a simple flick of the hand or fingers up and down, or back and forth; the movement is short and fast. Although beats may serve a referential function, their primary use is to regulate the flow of speech.

Teachers' gestures play a role when conducting goal-directed activities. It seems that foreign language teachers' gestures are fundamental aspects of teachers' pedagogical repertoire that must be taken into account when examining teacher-student interaction. It has been suggested that studies on gestures have already addressed directly the question of whether recipients actually "take up" the information gesture seems to provide. Goodwin in Talegani (2008) pointed out, in everyday talk, recipients of a performance or of talk in conversation do not make separate responses to the speakers' gestures. Instead, they respond to the discourse or conversational turn as an expression of an integrated unit of meaning. This means that it is difficult to demonstrate that a given gesture actually makes a difference in the communication. However, in classrooms, gestures are used to provide both additional and specific information on how the student's turn should be completed. By examining students' utterances, we can note their orientation to, and the "taking up" of, information provided by the gesture.



Figure 3. Teacher's relax body position

Furthermore, it was discussed that teacher's gestures interact very closely with the interactional unit performed in classroom. A specific gesture rises from its home position and is performed along with the speech sequences and once the sequence is completed it moves back to its home position.

#### *Eye Movement*

Teachers' eye movement includes looks at the class while talking. The face and eyes are probably the most noticed parts of the body, and their impact is powerful.



Figure 4. Teacher look at the class while talking

Eye behavior seems to be of particular importance and is generally used to indicate whether one is open to communication. This can be observed when a teacher asks the class a question: students who think they know the answer will generally look the teacher, while students who do not will usually try to avoid eye contact. Eye contact is often used to control an interpersonal interaction. When people do not wish the other person to speak, they will pause, making direct eye contact.



Figure 5. Teacher's eye contact in the classroom

Teachers often use eye contact in the classroom to decide who is prepared to answer a question, or who was completed a homework assignment. Many teachers, who suspect a student is cheating on a test may, in absence of other evidence, decide a student is lying because the student fails to look them in the eye when answering a direct question about the test. Unfortunately, there seems to be little validity to this theory. Research has actually found the reserves to be true-people who are lying are more likely to look the other person directly the eye, probably as a conscious response to the stereotype. Teachers can have individual eye contact with every student in the classroom through eye contact. Attitudes of intimacy, aloofness, concern, or indifference can be inferred by the way a teacher looks or avoids looking at a student.

### *Smile*

A smile is the best bridge to communicate with students. Students tend to be more relaxed in the process of learning when teachers carry a smile on their face. Teachers' smile includes smiles at the class while talking. Facial expression influenced students' motivation for learning English. Hsu (2010) stated that teacher smile more while talking to the class, thereby promoting the improvement of English teaching and learning.

Teachers' nonverbal immediacy behaviors are associated positively and significantly with students' motivation. Teachers with a smile on their face, is an effective predictor of students' motivation for learning English. It increases the degree of prediction when teachers demonstrated a relaxed body position, have gestures, and use a variety of vocal expression while teaching English. Students' motivation for learning English is likely to increase when teachers demonstrate nonverbal immediacy while teaching. Teachers' nonverbal immediacy behaviors contribute to positive interpersonal relationship with students (Hsu:2010).



Figure 6: Teacher's smile

One common question English teachers often ask themselves is, “How do we motivate students to learn English?” Students’ motivation has continually become a major concern for English teachers, novice or experiences, because students’ motivation is critical for the effectiveness of English teaching and learning. English teachers usually handle effectively classroom management or teaching techniques, but they continue to struggle with motivational problems among students. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on what “students” do to increase learning motivation, but considerably less has been done on what “teachers” do, much less focusing on “teacher immediacy behaviors,” a concept which describes teacher’s positive characteristics while teaching. The teacher can do much to capture students’ interest for learning English and maintaining the students’ motivation if the teacher builds positive characteristics or utilizes immediacy behaviors.

## CONCLUSION

Nonverbal communication is an important component of our daily life. Whenever people meet we will find conversation on non-verbal level, even if it seems to be no communication at all. The diversity of nonverbal communication is huge each individual has its own way of sending and receiving nonverbal messages.

The use of nonverbal codes in communication in classroom whether they are as teachers’ management talk or instructional talk cause the effectiveness of teaching and learning interaction in classroom, especially in English classroom interaction.

The research findings show the lecturers’ non verbal behaviors in English classroom interaction include: (1) gestures such as gesture while talking to the students, move around the classroom while teaching, and has a relaxed body position while talking to the class; (2) Eye movement such as looks at the class while talking, and (3) smiles at the class while talking.

Nonverbal behavior of foreign language teachers is a fundamental aspect of teacher-learner interaction and that teachers seem to utilize gestures as a means to provide comprehensible input to foreign language learners and to perform error correction.

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